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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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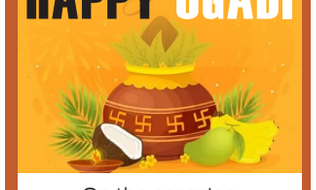
HAPPY UGADI



On the occasion of Ugadi, our offices will remain closed on 9 April, 2024. Hence, there will be no edition of the Salar Digital English Daily dated 10 April, 2024

Due to unforeseen technical issues, the late nation political page is being dropped from today's edition. We regret the inconvenience caused to the readers

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DROUGHT FUNDS ROW

SC says avoid tussle over aid, CM claims Centre lied

SC asks Centre to file reply over State's Rs 18K cr funds plea

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Let there not be a "contest" between the Union and the state, Supreme Court said on Monday. This was amid while hearing Karnataka government's plea seeking a direction to the Centre to release financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to the state for drought management.

In a press release issued after the court heard Karnataka's writ petition, Siddaramaiah said that it was "deplorable that the Union Government has submitted false information to the Supreme Court, (and was) attempting to deceive the court about the rightful drought relief that Karnataka is entitled to".

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta was told by Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who were appearing for the Centre, that they would seek instructions in the matter.

The apex court, which observed that various state governments were required to approach the court, initially asked the Centre to file a response to Karnataka's plea.

Urging the court to take up the matter after two weeks, the solicitor general said they would take instructions in the matter.

Mehta said instead of filing a petition in the top court, if somebody would have spoken to the authorities on the issue, the problem could have been resolved. "We have seen various state governments are required to approach the court," the bench observed.

It posted the matter for hearing after two weeks.

The petition has also sought to declare that the Centre's action in not releasing the financial assistance for drought arrangement as per the NDRF is "ex-facie violative" of the fundamental rights of the people of the State guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

The plea said 196 taluks are categorised as severely affected and the remaining 27 as moderately affected.

"Cumulatively for kharif 2023 season, the agriculture and horticulture crop loss have been reported in more than 48 lakh hectares with the estimated loss (cost of cultivation) of Rs 35,162 crore," the plea said.

It said the assistance sought from Government of India under the NDRF is Rs 18,171.44 crore.

"In terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Union of India is under obligation to render financial assistance to the state governments," the plea, settled by senior advocate Devdatt Kamat and state's Advocate General K Shashi Kiran Shetty, said.

It said the state is constrained to move the apex court against the "arbitrary actions" of the Centre in denying the financial assistance for drought management to Karnataka under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the manual for drought management updated in 2020.

It said under the manual for drought management, the Centre is required to take a final decision on the assistance to the state from the NDRF within a month of the receipt of the inter-ministerial central team (IMCT). "Despite the IMCT report, which visited various drought affected districts from 4 to 9 October, 2023 and made a comprehensive assessment of drought situation in the State, the Centre has not taken a final decision on the assistance to the state from the NDRF even after a lapse of almost six months from the date of the said report," the plea said. —*PTI*

Nearly dried up Mallathahalli Lake as City witnesses water shortage due to worst drought in about four decades, in Bengaluru ***PHOTO: PTI***

Congress leaders Salman Khurshid, Mukul Wasnik, Pawan Khera and Gurdeep Sappal after meeting the EC . ***PHOTO: PTI***

Cong files EC plaint against PM's 'Muslim League' remark

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Congress complained to Election Commission (EC) on Monday against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks targeting the party and comparing its Lok Sabha poll manifesto with that of the Muslim League.

A delegation of Congress leaders met EC officials and raised several issues, including the use of pictures and large cut-outs of Modi in government buildings and colleges and demanded that those be removed to maintain a level-playing field in the upcoming parliamentary election.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the party has filed a complaint against Modi for making comments against it, alleging that its manifesto attempts to divide the country and impose the pre-independence ideology of the Muslim League.

Modi has said in his election rallies that Congress' manifesto for the upcoming general election smacks of the "politics of appeasement" and carries the imprint of the Muslim League, with "every page reeking of breaking India".

Earlier in the day, Congress said Modi is scared over the prospect of the BJP struggling to cross the 180-seat mark in the Lok Sabha polls and again resorted to the "same cliched Hindu-Muslim script".

BJP's "ideological ancestors" supported the British and Muslim League against Indians in the freedom struggle, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said . —*PTI*

Can't jail all critics: SC gives YouTuber bail

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Observing that everyone who makes allegations on social media cannot be put behind bars, Supreme Court on Monday restored the bail to a YouTuber who was accused of making derogatory remarks against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin in 2021.

"If before elections we start putting behind bars everyone who makes allegations on YouTube, imagine how many will be jailed?" a bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan told senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Tamil Nadu government, as it set aside the order cancelling A Duraimurugan Sattai's bail,

The court was hearing Sattai's plea challenging an order of Madras High Court which cancelled his bail as he had made certain derogatory remarks against Stalin in violation of an undertaking given to the court.

While seeking bail in a case, Sattai had submitted an affidavit to the court undertaking that he would not pass derogatory remarks against anyone.

Sattai was arrested by the police for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Stalin and others but had been granted conditional bail.

"Scientific inventions are made for the welfare of mankind. The Internet is one such wonderful invention that has transformed the lives of many.

"Even an ordinary man is uploading his day-to-day activities, skills, thoughts, travel experiences on YouTube. In fact, in modern society, in most families, everyday meals are prepared using the videos uploaded on YouTube," High Court had said. —*PTI*

Duraimurugan Sattai ***PHOTO: X/ @SAATTAIDURAI***

- Sattai had submitted an affidavit to the court undertaking that he would not pass derogatory remarks.

HAPPY UGADI

People purchase fresh flowers ahead of Ugadi at KR Market in Bengaluru on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

NIA SUMMONS 3 TMC LEADERS IN 2022 BLAST CASE

KOLKATA, 8 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency has issued summons to three Trinamool Congress leaders asking them to appear before its officers for questioning in connection with the Bhupatinagar blast case, an official said on Monday.

The three leaders -- Manab Kumar Karaya, Subir Maity and Naba Kumar Ponda -- have been asked to appear before NIA officers here on Monday, he said.

The two arrested TMC leaders were "not cooperating" with our officers, the NIA officer said.

A team of the NIA was allegedly attacked by a mob on Saturday when it went to arrest two main suspects in a 2022 Bhupatinagar blast case in Purba Medinipur district, sparking a political slugfest with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accusing the investigators of assaulting the villagers.

TMC leaders were detained by the Delhi Police on Monday while they were holding a dharna outside the Election Commission's office, demanding that the chiefs of CBI, NIA, ED and Income Tax Department be changed.

A 10-member delegation of the TMC had announced the dharna after meeting a full-bench of the EC. —*PTI*

BJP man rams into Shobha's car, dies

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

A BJP worker riding a motorcycle was run over by a bus after he crashed into the open door of a car belonging to Union Minister of State for Agriculture Shobha Karandlaje and fell down during an election campaign at KR Puram here on Monday.

The deceased, identified as Prakash, 55, died on the spot in the incident that occurred near the Ganesha Temple in the locality.

Karandlaje is contesting the Lok Sabha polls from Bengaluru North constituency and Prakash was following her convoy during her election campaign.

Sources said the minister was inside the car. As soon as the door of her car was opened, Prakash crashed into it and fell down. The minister said he was run over by a bus coming from behind, killing him instantaneously. It was not known if it was Karandlaje who opened the door or someone else. Later speaking to reporters, she mourned Prakash's death. —*Salar News*

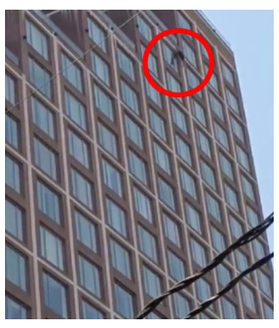


PHOTO: X

Youth jumps to death from City hotel

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

A 28-year-old man jumped to death from the 19th floor of Renaissance Hotel on Race Course Road on Monday. Sharan from Tamil Nadu had checked into the hotel on Sunday for a business visit, as per the entry made at the reception. After staying for two days, he came to the balcony on the 19th floor around noon. He walked around the balcony for some time before jumping to death. The video of the incident has gone viral on social media. The High Grounds Police are currently investigating and gathering information from the hotel staff. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or require emotional support, please contact Tele Manas at 14416, State government's health helpline Arogya Sahayavani (104), SAHAI (080 25497777, 9886444075) and Sa-Mudra Yuva Helpline (9880396331) —*Salar News*

NCERT flags pirated books with 'incorrect content'

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The NCERT on Monday issued a warning against pirated school textbooks, flagging possibilities of factually incorrect content.

It also warned against copyright infringement of its educational materials, cautioning the public against unauthorised printing and commercial sale of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) school textbooks. "A few unscrupulous publishers were printing NCERT school textbooks available on its website under their own name, without obtaining permission from the NCERT. Anyone found publishing NCERT textbooks, either in whole or in part, for commercial sale or using NCERT textbook content in their publications without obtaining explicit copyright permission, will face legal repercussions under the Copyright Act of 1957," a senior council official said.

"The general public is requested to kindly stay away from such textbooks or workbooks as their content may be factually incorrect as well as against the basic philosophy of NCF (National Curriculum Framework for School Education) 2023. We also urge individuals who come across such pirated textbooks or workbooks to immediately report it to the council," the official added.

The NCERT last week announced that textbooks for Class 3 will be available by the last week of April and for Class 6 by mid-May.

It had said that 1.21 crore copies of the 2023-2024 editions of textbooks for classes 1, 2, 7, 8, 10 and 12 have been released nationwide. —*PTI*

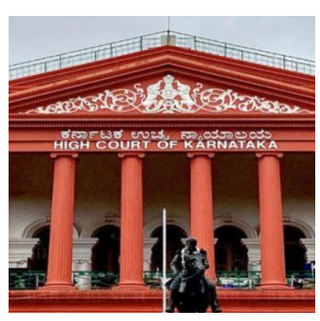
'PLAYING WITH KIDS' FUTURE'

SC stays K'taka class 5, 8, 9, 11 board results

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the Karnataka High Court order permitting the State government to go ahead with Board Examinations for classes 5,8, 9 and 11. The top court also ordered a stay on declaring the results of such examinations.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal directed that the results of such exams would not be used for any purpose whatsoever and not to be informed to parents too.



SC says HC order does not align with RTE Act ***PHOTO: PTI***

The court also remarked that Karnataka state is playing with students' future and causing hardship.

The court observed that the order of the Karnataka High Court prima facie does not seem to align with the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

"The operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed till further orders," the court said while issuing notice on the plea. The court was hearing the plea filed by Registered Unaided Private Schools Management Association Karnataka.

The petitioner has challenged the Karnataka High Court's 22 March order which permitted the state government to go ahead with the board examinations for classes 5,8, 9 and 11. —*ANI*

5 held with counterfeit notes worth ₹30cr

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Central Crime Branch of City police have arrested five people and seized counterfeit notes with a total face value of Rs 30.92 crore. The gang targeted trusts by promising to give them Rs 1 crore under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from various companies in exchange for an initial payment of Rs 40 lakh, City Police Commissioner B Dayananda said. "They convinced trusts by displaying large sums of cash, purportedly up to Rs 100 crore. Once the trust members were persuaded and made the payment, the gang absconded, leaving behind a trail of victims." CCB's Women Protection Wing laid a trap and apprehended the culprits on Sunday night.
—Salar News

PHOTO: SALAR

Woman fined ₹1.36L for 270 traffic violations

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

The Bengaluru traffic police have fined a woman Rs 1.36 lakh for violating traffic rules on 270 occasions. The woman was found in violation of the helmet rule and was also caught using her mobile phone while riding her two-wheeler. The City police also said that the woman repeatedly violated traffic rules, including jumping signals and driving her vehicle on the wrong side in one-way lanes. According to the Bengaluru traffic police, the woman frequently travels in Maruthi Sevanagar, Subbaiahna palya, Kalyan Nagar, Cox Tow, Wheeler Road, Banaswadi and nearby areas. She was apprehended after police officers took a photo of her vehicle and shared it on X.
—Salar News

It's Lingayat Seer vs Joshi in Dharwad

Seer slams Joshi for people's grievances

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Lingayat pontiff Fakir Dingaleshwara Mahaswami of the Shirahatti Bhavaikyata Maha Sansthan has officially made his entry in Dharwad Parliamentary seat in upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

Mahaswami's candidacy poses a direct challenge to BJP's Union Minister Pralhad Joshi who is seeking re-election for an unprecedented fifth term. This has sent ripples through Karnataka's political landscape.

A few seers in the Dharwad region, especially those from Lingayat community, met in Hubballi on 27 March under the leadership of Dingaleshwar Swami and asked BJP central leadership to change the party's Dharwad Lok Sabha candidate Joshi. They had given the party time till March 31 to decide.The Lingayat seer expressed his dissatisfaction with Joshi's leadership, citing grievances allegedly faced by the people under his tenure. In

Dingaleshwara Mahaswami
PHOTO: ANI

his decision lies a deep-seated concern for the welfare of the Lingayat community, whose interests he feels have been overlooked by mainstream political parties.

"BJP's wielding of power has had detrimental effects, including the removal of Yediyurappa from the CM's post." Mahaswami asserted. Speaking to reporters, Mahaswami lamented the perceived injustice in the allocation of tickets by major political players, particularly BJP, which has long held sway in Karnataka politics.He characterised his campaign as a righteous crusade aimed at challenging the entrenched dominance of conventional political forces and championing the cause of marginalized communities. "BJP has strayed from the path of social justice, particularly in its treatment of the Lingayat community. This is not merely a political contest; it is a battle for the soul of our democracy" remarked Mahaswami, highlighting the ideological underpinning of his electoral bid.Lingayats are said to be the majority among voters in the Dharwad segment, while Joshi, a four-time MP, is a Brahmin.

The revered seer, known for his spiritual guidance and community leadership, has chosen to contest as an independent candidate, marking a significant departure from traditional party politics. He called upon voters to rally behind him in a bid to usher in a new era of inclusive governance that prioritises the welfare of all segments of society.
—Salar News

Yathindra faces villagers' ire amid poll boycott threat

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 8 APRIL

Tensions flared in Mallupura gram panchayat of Nanjangudu taluk as Yathindra Siddaramaiah, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, faced the ire of villagers during his campaign for Congress candidate Sunil Bose in Chamarajanagar.

The incident occurred amid farmers from three villages of Siddaramaiah's hometown staging protest against Bannari Amman sugar factory, demanding their grievances be addressed.

The farmers warned of boycotting the elections in three villages if their demands remained unmet.

The tension escalated when Yathindra arrived at the scene after campaigning in

PHOTO: PTI

Mallupura village panchayat of Nanjangudu taluk.

He was accused of opportunisms and said he is merely seeking votes without addressing their grievances. The protesters rebuked him, questioning why the issues had not been raised with his father. Yathindra opted to withdraw from the confrontation, leaving the scene without making headway with the protesters.
—Salar News

Section 144 on mutt premises after violence

BALLARI, 8 APRIL

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC have been imposed around Yerriswamy Mutt at Kalangal village of Ballari taluk after two groups clashed over the installation of an idol.

One group installed the idol of Sri Yerriswamy Yerrithatha of Chellagurki and started worshipping. The opposite group went to court and got an order to remove the idol. Despite the court order, the group refused to remove the idol, leading to a verbal altercation and stone pelting.

Law enforcement officials, tried to quell the violence but were met with resistance as miscreants targeted them with stones. *—Salar News*

CAMPAIGN TIME

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and other leaders campaign for Bengaluru Central Congress candidate Mansoor Ali Khan at Rajajinagar in Bengaluru on Monday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Congress in State stands robust and stable: CM

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday asserted that Congress government headed by him in the State stands "robust" and "stable".

Hitting out at Opposition BJP leaders, he said it appears that it is their "intellect" that is facing "bankruptcy", not the State.

"Do not embarrass yourselves by lying every day and then manufacturing more falsehoods to defend them when they are exposed," Siddaramaiah said in a statement aimed at BJP.

Accusing the saffron party of "blabbering" about the State going bankrupt because of a loan of Rs 10,000 crore in the April-June quarter last year, he suggested that they examine the debt records of the previous BJP government's tenure. Elaborating further, Siddaramaiah alleged that during the financial year 2020-21, BJP's Basavaraj Bommai as chief minister had taken a loan of Rs 84,528 crore.

The following year, 2021-22 saw an additional borrowing of Rs 67,332 crore, and in 2022-23, the loan amount reached

Siddaramaiah PHOTO: PTI

Rs 72,000 crore, Siddaramaiah said.

"To repay this debt, Rs 43,580 crore was spent in 2022-23. Consequently, the responsibility to settle these debts now falls on us," he said.

Slamming BJP leaders, he said it seems that governance, economy, and development are not their cup of tea and alleged that they excel only in filling people's minds with "Hindu-Muslim, communalism, Pakistan, and Muslim League issues, causing strife among peacefully coexisting communities for political gain".

"The people of the state know who is 'Sullu (lie) Ramaiah' and who is 'Satya (true) Ramaiah'. They will accordingly answer you in this election," he added.
—PT

PHOTO: SALAR

BJP ASKS SIMHA, PREETHAM NOT TO CAMPAIGN

MYSURU, 8 APRIL

BJP high command have ordered Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha and Hassan BJP leader Preetham J Gowda to not campaign in their respective constituencies.

The duo had harboured hopes of securing BJP tickets for the upcoming elections but they have now been sidelined. They have expressed their disappointment yet were compelled to engage in campaigning.

This is to mitigate potential internal conflicts, considering the strong foothold these leaders have in their respective regions. While Simha has been sporadically participating in campaign meetings for BJP candidate Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar in Kodagu, Gowda has been campaigning in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar constituencies.
—Salar News

Honour 1st Ranji winners: CM to Cricket Association

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

In a latter, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday urged the President of the Karnataka State Cricket Association, proposing to name the stands of Chinnaswamy Stadium after the legendary cricketers who were part of the 1974 first Ranji Trophy-winning team. The stands will honour GR Vishwanath, EAS Prasanna, and BS Chandrasekhar, recognising their contributions to State cricket. The letter was sent to Siddaramaiah by historian, environmentalist, and writer, Ramachandra Guha. This initiative coincides with the 50th anniversary of Karnataka's historic victory in the Ranji Trophy, breaking Bombay's 15-year winning streak and marking the State's first triumph in the tournament.
—Salar News

FESTIVE MOOD

Clockwise from top left: People purchase sweets and dresses in Bengaluru ahead of Ramadan; Muslims attend the 26th day of Ramadan midnight prayers at Masjid-E-Khadria on Millers Road on Monday; Commercial Street is lit up as people throng to shop PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

CITY SOUND ENGINEER DIES IN SHARJAH

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

A Bengaluru native was among two Indians who lost their lives in a fire that engulfed a residential building in Sharjah's Al Nahda area in UAE on Thursday night.

One of the deceased was Michael Sathyadass, 47, a resident of Kothanur here in the City. He was an employee of DXB Live at Dubai World Trade Centre. According to his brother Danny Sathyadass, he had contributed to concerts

Michael Sathyadass PHOTO: SALAR

featuring Bruno Mars and AR Rahman. "It is a difficult time for the family to lose Michael," his brother Emmanuel Sathyadass told **Salar News.**
—Salar News

COPS SEIZE EXPLOSIVES IN KOLAR

KOLAR, 8 APRIL

During a routine check-up at the election check post at K Bayyapalli in Mulbagal taluk of Kolar district on Sunday, the authorities found a huge haul of explosives and one person has been arrested in connection with carrying explosive materials.

The arrested has been identified as Shaik Hazara Sharief, 28, a resident of Madanapalli in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. According to police, extension officer of backward class Development Corporation and his staff DN Gopalakrishna intercepted a car bearing Andhra registration number.

Police said that the authorities found 1,200 gelatin sticks and 155 detonators and seven rolls of cardex wire. On being questioned Sharief said they were transporting these explosives from Andhra Pradesh to various parts of Karnataka without any valid license.
—Salar News

Davangere sees rise in female voters

DAVANGERE, 8 APRIL

Karnataka has seen an increase in women voters in 17 out of the 28 Lok Sabha constituencies. In State, there is approximately 7 per cent rise in number of female voters over the past five years, with 8,40,340 women out of a total of 16,79,746 voters holding sway in the electorate across eight assembly constituencies of Davangere compared to 8,05,688 women voters in 2019. Demographic shift underscores the need for politicians to tailor their campaigns to address women-centric issues. Congress and BJP have fielded women candidates in Davangere, reflecting the growing importance of appealing to female voters. Prabha Mallikarjun, wife of Congress district in-charge minister SS Mallikarjun and Gayatri Siddeshwara, wife of BJP MP GM Siddeshwara are among the contenders vying for parliamentary representation in the region. *—Salar News*

ITS IS EID UL-FITR!

Hands are full for Henna artists ahead of Eid in City

MEGHANA PRASAD
BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

As Eid ul-Fitr is around the corner in Bengaluru, the City buzzes with anticipation, not just for the spiritual significance it holds but also for the colourful festivities that accompany it. Among these traditions, adorning hands with intricate henna designs, known as mehndi, takes centre stage.

However, this year, the demand for henna artists has surged to unprecedented levels, with many finding themselves fully booked well in advance. From traditional designs to contemporary patterns, henna artists in the City offer a spectrum of choices to suit every taste.

Reflecting on the influx of customers, Zara Khan, a henna artist near Basavanagudi told Salar News "This Ramadan has been exceptionally busy for us. We've seen a surge in bookings from clients across the City. Normally we get 15 bookings for a day, but with Ugadi and Ramadan coming up, we have more than 30 bookings for Tuesday. We are expecting more bookings to come up before Ramadan."

While many artists are local residents who honed their skills through family traditions or independent learning, there are also growing communities of artists who hail from states like Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, known for their rich mehndi (henna) traditions. Anika Sharma, a henna artist originally from Rajasthan and now settled near Banashankari 2nd Stage, told Salar News "I came to Bengaluru five years ago. The City offered a great platform to showcase my art. We provide temporary henna tattoos and DIY (Do It Yourself) henna kits for people who are unable to secure appointments with professional artists." The kit includes design stencils and henna packs. The stencils are kept on the hand and the henna is traced along the design. The stencil is then taken out leaving behind a beautiful design on the hand.

The most sought-after mehndi designs this season encompass a blend of traditional motifs and contemporary elements PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

In the world of mehndi, the artistry can range from simple to extravagant, reflected in the pricing. Bridal mehndi, the most intricate, starts at Rs 2,000 and custom designs begin at Rs 3,000. On the other hand, mehndi for both hands and legs costs Rs 3,000-Rs 4,000. "For festive occasions, we charge Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 respectively for basic designs. We charge the people according to the number of sides they want for their mehndi. Like for one side of the hand, we charge Rs 500-Rs 1,000 depending on the design. For more intricate designs, one side of the hand costs Rs 1,000-Rs 1500," Khan said.

The most sought-after mehndi designs this season encompass a blend of traditional motifs and contemporary elements. Intricate floral patterns, geometric shapes, and Arabic-inspired designs top the list of preferences among clients. "Indo-Arabic and floral designs, which are in demand now, are simple, yet elegant to the hands," Sharma said. Henna melas, temporary markets specialising in henna application, are another vibrant aspect of Ramadan season. These melas, often set up in community centres or public spaces, are a one-stop shop for henna enthusiasts. "The melas cater to a different clientele," Khan said. "They offer quicker, simpler designs at a low price. For those seeking elaborate artwork, booking an appointment with a professional artist is recommended." Some of the melas set up in the City can be found in Commercial Street, Basavanagudi, Banashankari and Jayanagar 3rd block.

For those who miss out on getting henna or have skin sensitivities, there are other alternatives such as Jagua gels, which are extracted from the jagua fruit and do not have any irritation on the skin. It offers a similar dark staining effect but lasts slightly less long (typically 1-2 weeks). Stick-on Henna tattoos are also an option for them.
—Salar News

PHOTO: PIXABAY

4 killed, 12 injured in Punjab car accident

KAPURTHALA, 8 APRIL

Four people were killed and atleast a dozen injured in a collision between two cars on the Kapurthala-Goindwal road in Punjab, police said on Monday. The accident occurred on Sunday night near Fattudhinga village, they said. Those killed included three women travelling in a jeep and the driver of the other car, police said and added that those injured were travelling in the jeep. While the jeep was coming from Anandpur Sahib side, the other car was coming from Sultanpur Lodhi, they said. *—PTI*

3 killed in road accident in Odisha

PHULBANI, 8 APRIL

Three people were killed when the scooter on which they were travelling fell from a bridge in Odisha's Kandhamala district, police said on Monday. Three people were returning to Raikia village after witnessing 'Danda Nacha' (folk dance) on Sunday night when their scooter hit a roadside pole and they fell off the Budamaha bridge from a height of around 10 feet, the police said. The trio were identified as Brahmananda Bhoi, 27, Basant Panda,25, and Kushal Digal, 25. The bodies have sent for postmortem, police added. *—PTI*

2 men held at Delhi airport for 'nuclear bomb' threat

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Delhi Police has arrested two men at the Indira Gandhi International Airport for mentioning they were "carrying a nuclear bomb", officials said on Monday. The incident happened on April 5 when Jignesh Malani and Kashyap Kumar Lalani, residents of Rajkot in Gujarat, objected to being frisked by the security staff before boarding an Ahmedabad-bound flight, the police said. According to the FIR filed by an airline official, the duo asked the security staff "what will you do if I am carrying a nuclear bomb".Malani and Lalani were arrested as they posed security threat to the aircraft and its passengers, a senior police official said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI Airport) Usha Rangani said investigation has revealed that the accused are contractors in the construction sector. "They had travelled to Dwarka in Delhi to meet a business associate regarding a purchase. Following their arrests, they were released on bail and the investigation is ongoing," the DCP said. *—PTI*

Man dies after taking water slide at Noida mall

NOIDA, 8 APRIL

A Delhi-based man, 25 died shortly after taking a slide at a water park located in a mall's premises in Noida, prompting an investigation by the local police, officials said. Dhanjay Maheshwari along with his four friends had on Sunday afternoon visited the Entertainment City water park at the Great India Place (GIP) Mall in Sector 38A, under Sector 39 police station limits, they said. "After collecting costumes and keeping their belongings in lockers, all the friends went straight to the slide. They arrived one by one and started sliding, when Maheshwari suddenly started having trouble breathing," a police spokesperson said. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Manish Mishra said the family members of Maheshwari also reached Noida soon after the incident and the body was being sent for postmortem. Maheshwari lived in Delhi's Adarsh Nagar, Shivaji Road Extension. *—PTI*

Climate change impacts right to life and equality: SC

Judgment comes after petition filed by wildlife activists

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Climate change impacts the constitutional guarantee of the right to equality, the Supreme court has said while constituting a committee to find a balance between conservation of critically-endangered Great Indian Bustard and renewable energy infrastructure in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The top court recalled an earlier order of April 2021 that required undergrounding of overhead transmission lines across an area of over 80,000 sq km in the two states. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said a blanket direction for undergrounding high voltage and low voltage power lines needs recalibration.

"Climate change may impact the constitutional guarantee of the right to equality. Without a clean environment which is stable and unimpacted by the vagaries of climate change, the right to life is not fully realised. The right to health (which is a part of the right to life under Article 21) is impacted due to factors such as air pollution, shifts in vector-borne diseases, rising temperatures, droughts, shortages in food supplies due to crop failure, storms, and flooding," the bench said.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said the rights to life and equality cannot be fully realised without a clean, stable environment PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) are especially found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and the alarming decrease in their numbers is attributed to frequent collisions with overhead power transmission lines, including those of solar plants, near their habitats. GIBs have lateral vision as their eyes are on the sides of their head and they find it difficult to change their course of flight when confronted with a live wire.The bench in an order, passed on 21 March, formed an expert committee comprising Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Dr Hari Shankar Singh, member, National Board for Wildlife, Niranjan Kumar Vasu, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, B Majumdar, former Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Maharashtra, Dr Devesh Gadhavi, Deputy Director, The Corbett Foundation, Lalit Bohra, Joint Secretary (Green Energy Corridor), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy; and Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

"The right to a healthy environment encapsulates the principle that every individual has the entitlement to live in an environment that is clean, safe, and conducive to their well-being. By recognising the right to a healthy environment and the right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change, states are compelled to prioritise environmental protection and sustainable development, thereby addressing the root causes of climate change and safeguarding the wellbeing of present and future generations,"the bench said. *—PTI*

'CONSENT NEEDED'

SC seeks govt reply to ban intersex surgery on babies

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre, the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) and others on a PIL seeking to safeguard the interests of inter-sex children who undergo unregulated sex-change surgeries in the country.

An intersex individual is born with a combination of male and female biological traits, and the person's sex assigned at birth does not fit within the definite social categories of 'male' and 'female'.

The bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of the counsel appearing for the petitioner, Gopi Shankar M. They also issued notice in the petition and requested Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati to assist the Court.

The PIL concerns the lack of recognition of the rights of inter-sex people, with special emphasis on inter-sex children. The petitioner highlighted that such children face discrimination from the point of their birth as there is no option to register their birth and death details on the online government registration applications. The census also excludes their representation and they are not recognised as voters.

A key concern raised by the petitioner was that sex-determination surgeries are being performed with the consent of the parents of infants in several states. It is only in the state of Tamil Nadu that such surgeries have been banned by the Madras High Court until the child attains the age of giving informed consent. There is a need for a legislative mechanism to address the concerns that arise out of the medical interventions done with a child who undergoes inter-sex surgery.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- PIL has made Union Ministries of Home Affairs, Social Justice and Empowerment, Health and Family Welfare, and Women and Child Development parties to the plea

The PIL has made Union Ministries of Home Affairs, Social Justice and Empowerment, Health and Family Welfare, Law and Justice, and Women and Child Development parties to the plea.

The Registrar General, the Census Commissioner of India and the CARA has also made parties to the plea. *—PTI/LiveLaw*

Christian Diocese screens 'The Kerala Story'

T'PURAM, 8 APRIL

Amid a raging row over national broadcaster Doordarshan airing the controversial Bollywood movie 'The Kerala Story', a Catholic diocese in Kerala has screened the film for teenagers as part of an "intensive training programme".

The Idukki Diocese, under the prominent Syro Malabar Catholic Church, screened the movie last week for its children studying in Classes 10, 11, and 12, and asked them to discuss the film and write a review about it.

Directed by Sudipto Sen, the film is about a group of women from Kerala who were forced to convert to Islam and join ISIS.

As news of the screening of the controversial movie hit headlines, the Diocese on Monday came out with an explanation, claiming that the movie was shown to "create awareness about love relationships and its consequences and dangers".

Fr Jins Karakkat, the media in-charge of the Diocese, said they conduct an intensive training programme for children every year during vacation.

"Nowadays, there are circumstances in which teenagers are largely falling in love and facing dangers. So, we intended to create awareness among our children about such dangers," he explained.

To bring the idea to the children more effectively, the movie 'The Kerala Story' was shown, Fr Karakkat further said.

When quizzed about the controversy surrounding the film, the priest said he had no idea about it and only knew that it was released on an OTT platform.

Despite a strong protest raised by the ruling CPI(M) and Congress in Kerala, Doordarshan last week aired the controversial Bollywood movie 'The Kerala Story'. *—PTI*

GUDI PADWA

Women in traditional attire take part in a procession to celebrate the Marathi New Year, on the eve of 'Gudi Padwa', in Nagpur on Monday PHOTO: PTI

'Kanyadaan' not must, says Allahabad HC

LUCKNOW, 8 APRIL

The Allahabad High Court has held that 'kanyadaan' is not necessary for solemnisation of marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, and only 'saptapadi' is an essential ceremony.

A bench of Justice Subhash Vidyarthi made the observation while hearing a revision petition filed by one Ashutosh Yadav, who had stated that his marriage under the Act mandated a 'kanyadaan' (giving away the bride) ceremony, which was not performed in his case.

In its order on March 22, the court said the Hindu Marriage Act merely provides for 'saptpadi' (seven steps or saat pheras) as an essential ceremony of a marriage. Considering the overall circumstances, kanyadaan is not necessary for solemnization of Hindu marriage, the court said.

- Considering the overall circumstances, kanyadaan is not necessary for solemnization of Hindu marriage, the court said

"Whether the ceremony of kanyadaan was performed or not, would not be essential for the just decision of the case and, therefore, a witness cannot be summoned under Section 311 CrPC for proving this fact," the court said. Yadav had challenged an order passed by Lucknow additional sessions judge on March 6 while contesting a criminal case filed by his in-laws. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

SC stays proceedings against TN min

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Supreme Court on Monday stayed till further orders the proceedings in a corruption case against Tamil Nadu Rural Development Minister I Periyasamy.

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra said since the top court is examining the appeal of the Minister, who has challenged a 26 February Madras High Court order which set aside the trial court order discharging him in the case, the proceedings in the matter need to be stayed.

In an application filed through advocate Ram Sankar, Periyasamy sought the apex court's direction for deferment of trial and exemption from personal appearance in the graft case before a Chennai court. The allegation against Periyasamy is that during his tenurehe colluded with others to unlawfully acquire a High Income Group Plot through the Tamil Nadu Housing Board in the Mogappair Eri Scheme. *—PTI*

Student missing from Pune found murdered in Ahmednagar

PUNE, 8 APRIL

A woman, 22, engineering student who went missing on 30 March from Pune in Maharashtra has been found murdered in the state's Ahmednagar district, a police official said.

She was allegedly kidnapped by three persons, including a college friend, for ransom and later strangled, the official said on Sunday. The woman's body was found in Ahmednagar on Sunday, he said, adding the three accused have been arrested.

"The student was pursuing engineering from a college in Wagholi area here. On 29 March, a male college friend and two others met her and dropped her at her hostel. On 30 March, they took her to Ahmednagar. They sought a ransom of Rs 9,00,000 from her parents. They then strangled her, buried the body on the outskirts of Ahmednagar and removed the SIM card of her cellphone," he said.

As her family members could not establish contact with her, they came to the college and hostel, but when they did not find her, they filed a missing complaint with police, the official said.

Later, the accused sent a message to her parents demanding a ransom of Rs 9 lakh. The family then alerted the police who zeroed-in on the three accused through technical analysis, he said.

After being apprehended, the three persons told the police about the crime committed by them, the official said. *—PTI*

TALES FROM RELIEF CAMPS

Right to live before right to vote, peace before polls: Manipur citizens

IMPHAL, 8 APRIL

"Why should I vote to elect a representative of a place which is no longer mine ... elections mean nothing to us," says a distraught Nobi, who lost her home 11 months ago to ethnic violence in Manipur and is living in a relief camp.

The 42-year-old is not alone as "right to live before right to vote" and "peace before polls" was the common refrain of many who have not been able to return home due to recurrent clashes and lingering hostilities between the warring ethnic groups in the north-eastern state.

The state has traditionally seen a very high voter turnout with more than 82 per cent polling recorded in the 2019 elections. But the ethnic violence has cast a shadow on the polls this time around with several civil society groups and the affected people questioning the relevance of holding elections in the current circumstances.

The hill state has witnessed sporadic, sometime intense, ethnic clashes since 3 May between the majority Meitei community and the Kukis, resulting in the loss of more than 200 lives.

The elections for two Lok Sabha seats in Manipur will be held in two phases on 19 and 26 April. While Inner Manipur and some segments of Outer Manipur will vote in the first phase on 19 April, the remaining segments of Outer Manipur will vote in Phase 2 on 26 April.

They question the timing of the Lok Sabha elections and say the idea of organising voting in relief camps is nothing but a gimmick as the real issues remain unaddressed. PTI visited four relief camps in the Imphal Valley where the displaced people expressed discontent with the poll process. The Election Commission has announced that the displaced population will have the opportunity to cast their votes from relief camps. KH Khamba , 45, who used to run his transport business in the Kuki-dominated area of Moreh, a town near the Indian-Myanmar border that is 120 kilometres from his relief camp, says, "There had to be some resolution for the current situation before elections were conducted."

According to Election Commission officials, over 24,000 people living in the relief camps have been found eligible to vote and 94 special polling stations are being set up for the purpose. Posters of political parties, mega rallies and visible movement of leaders -- the traditional elements of campaigning -- are conspicuously missing in the strife-torn state. *—PTI*

A relief camp for displaced persons in violence-hit Manipur; KH Khamba (top) a transporter who moved to a relief camp from Moreh, a town on the Indo-Myanmar border, after violence broke out in Manipur, in Imphal; Dima, a first-time voter living in a relief camp PHOTO: PTI

VOTER AWARENESS RALLY

Women participate in a voter awareness rally ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, in Moradabad, on Monday
PHOTO: PTI

India and Pakistan trade barbs over targeted killings

Defence minister Rajnath Singh said that India would kill anyone who escaped to Pakistan after disturbing peace in the country ***PHOTO: PTI***

India and Pakistan are trading barbs after a news report said that Delhi had carried out at least 20 extrajudicial killings in the neighbouring country.

India has not officially reacted to the allegations, which were made in The Guardian newspaper last week.

But on Friday, defence minister said that India would kill anyone who escaped to Pakistan after disturbing peace in the country.

Pakistan has reacted sharply, calling the remarks provocative.

The two countries share a tense relationship and have fought three wars since they became independent nations in 1947.

Relations reached an all-time low in 2019, when India carried out airstrikes on militant camps in Pakistan's Balakot region as retaliation for a suicide attack that had killed 40 troops in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad had claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place in Pulwama district.

Since then, an uneasy lull has prevailed over the countries' ties.

The latest flare-up of tensions began on Thursday after The Guardian in a report claimed that India had been involved in killing at least 20 people in Pakistan since 2020 as part of a broader policy to "target terrorists living on foreign soil". The allegation comes months after Canada also accused India of carrying out extrajudicial killings in the country - a charge Delhi denies.

It also comes at a time when India is weeks away from general elections, which are set to be held from 19 April. Pakistan is an emotive issue in India and analysts say that politicians, especially from the governing BJP, often use it as a nationalistic poll plank to curry favour with voters.

In the report, the newspaper quoted "senior officials from two separate Pakistani intelligence agencies" who claimed that India's spy agency - the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) - was directly involved in the assassinations.

The unnamed officials claimed that India's targeted assassinations in Pakistan and the West had "increased significantly" since 2023 and that Delhi had drawn inspiration from other foreign spy agencies, which have been linked to extrajudicial killings on foreign soil.

The report goes on to cite two unnamed Indian officials as saying that India decided to target dissidents abroad after the Pulwama attack in 2019.

India did not immediately respond to the newspaper's allegations, although the report quotes the foreign ministry citing a previous denial made by Foreign Minister S Jaishankar that targeted killings in other countries were "not the government of India's policy".

But on Friday, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that "any terrorist trying to create turmoil in India won't be spared".

India has not yet responded to the latest allegations by Pakistan.

In September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had claimed that there were "credible allegations potentially linking" the Indian state to the murder of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

India has denied the allegations and has said that Canada has not shared "concrete evidence" to back the claim.

In November, the US too had said that it had foiled an alleged plot by an Indian national, Nikhil Gupta, to assassinate Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

India denied any involvement but said it was "co-operating" with US authorities on the issue.

—BBC News

SALAR ساہر

Political merchandise sales spike before polls

Vendors selling flags of various political parties including BJP, TMC, Congress and others ahead of Lok Sabha elections, at a shop, in Kolkata ***PHOTO: ANI***

Days before the country heads into a six-week election with nearly a billion registered voters, political party merchandise and flag makers are expanding operations and working overtime to meet a surge in demand.

Ahead of the first voting day of the seven-phase election on 19 April, garment makers are temporarily converting factories where they usually make saris into production hubs for election flags and banners.

One such factory owner, Mukesh Agarwal, said there are as many as 40 similar factories in Mathura, a temple town in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and key political battleground.

"The cheapest and best items used for political campaigns are banners and flags," Agarwal said.

Election merchandise is a low-margin, high-volume business, where the price of a party badge can start from 1 rupee ($0.01).

Agarwal said some factories can produce a million flags a day if demand continues to increase.

During an election, the country is plastered with posters of hundreds of political parties and thousands of candidates.

"As many people have little education, party workers use flags to promote their symbols and hang them outside houses and make them the medium of their campaigns," Agarwal said.

A textile hub in Surat, in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat, is the centre of election merchandise along with several smaller hotspots like Mathura in the north and Hyderabad in the south.

Elections give the economy a boost as political parties spend on goods and services as varied as small merchandise and helicopter rental.

> Elections give the economy a boost as political parties spend on goods and services as varied as small merchandise and helicopter rental

Gulshan Khurana, general secretary of a trader's association in Old Delhi's Sadar Bazaar market, said political parties spend 30 billion to 50 billion rupees ($360-600m) on election merchandise, creating as many as 10 million jobs.

Khurana, who has been a market trader for nearly 50 years, said there has been a nearly 30 percent increase in business compared with the last election in 2019, when BJP spent a record sum to retain power.

An opinion poll last week predicted an easy win for a Modi-backed coalition.

But Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said at Friday release of his party's manifesto that the election is "much closer than being propagated".

—AL Jazeera

The cheapest and best items used for political campaigns are banners and flags ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

Why high-school textbooks were wrong about shape of Earth's orbit?

Sun is not at the centre of the eclipse but offset to one side as a point called focus ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

If you've ever been taught about how Earth orbits around the Sun, you might well think our planet travels along an oval-shaped path that brings it much closer to the Sun at some times of the year than at others. You'd have a good reason to think that, too: it's how most textbooks show things.

Indeed, many people assume Earth is closer to the Sun in summer than in winter. As it happens, this is true during summer in the southern hemisphere, but it can't also be true for summer in the northern hemisphere.

In the southern hemisphere, Earth is 5 million kilometres closer to the Sun in summer than in winter, but it's the reverse in the northern hemisphere. The average Earth–Sun distance is 150 million kilometres, and the main reason for the seasons is Earth is tilted so each pole is sometimes pointing more toward the Sun and sometimes more away from it.

So Earth's orbit only has a relatively tiny deviation from perfect circularity. But why is it so often shown as practically an egg shape? And how can we visualise the real situation?

Consider the bike wheel

In order to try to understand myself how circular the orbit of the Earth was and other planets, I decided to compare the shape of Earth's orbit to an ordinary 26-inch bike wheel by scaling down the real dimensions to fit – and consulting my local bike shop about what the deviations would mean for a real wheel. I was very surprised at the result.

The orbit was far closer to a perfect circle than I had previously thought. If the orbit were a 26-inch (660.4mm) bicycle wheel the deviation from a perfect circle would be less than 0.1mm. That's comparable to a thin coat of paint – essentially indistinguishable from a perfect circle to the naked eye.

I looked at the other planets, too. The orbits of Venus and Neptune are even closer to perfect circles, with the orbit of Venus deviating only 14μm (a μm or micrometre is a millionth of a metre) and Neptune 31μm.

The planets with the least circular orbits are Mars and Mercury. If the orbit of Mars were a 26-inch bike wheel it would be out by just less than 3mm – hardly noticeable if you were riding a bike with a wheel out of true by this amount.

Mercury has the least circular of the orbits, with a deviation of 14mm, although this is still only 2%.

If you have a bike, chances are its wheels are not even as circular as Mars's orbit. If you've had a decent collision with a curb or rock, your front wheel might even be less circular than the orbit of Mercury.

A tiny deviation

Mathematically minded readers might have a question after reading the above: if Earth is on average 150 million kilometres from the Sun, and this distance varies by 5 million kilometres over the course of a year, shouldn't the deviation in its orbit be a little over 3%?

The answer to this question is the Sun is not at the centre of the ellipse but offset to one side as a point called the focus. If during formation, a planet travelled at just the right speed to counteract gravity it would travel in a circle.

However, in the real universe planets rarely go at just the right speed for a circle. Sometimes they travel a bit faster and sometimes slower, which can only be achieved with an elliptical orbit.

Coming full circle

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks believed all celestial objects orbited around the Earth, travelling in perfect circles.

This idea held sway for about 1,500 years, until Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) realised the planets (including Earth) actually orbited around the Sun.

Copernicus thought the orbits were circular. Later, German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) realised he was wrong and came up with the three laws of planetary motion.

The first law is the orbits of the planets are elliptical and not circular. The third law links the size of a planet's orbit to the amount of time it takes in a way that's a bit too complicated for us to get into here. The main reason why orbits are drawn as ellipses in textbooks is to demonstrate Kepler's second law. If the orbit of the Earth was drawn as shown in the correctly scaled diagram it would be impossible to see any difference in the wedges.

However, this can give the impression the orbit of the Earth is far more elliptical than it actually is. Such diagrams are not actually wrong – they are an exaggeration, a kind of mathematical caricature that emphasises an important feature.

Although the ancient Greeks were wrong about the Earth being at the centre of the solar system they were not far wrong about the orbits of the planets. So, if you'll excuse the pun, we have come full circle.

—The Conversation

View of the destruction after Israeli forces' withdrawal from Khan Younis; A woman cries amid the debris of a collapsed building; A child plays amid rubble

PHOTO: COURTESY, AL JAZEERA

Gazans return to destroyed Khan Younis post Israel withdrawal

DEIR AL-BALAH, 8 APRIL

Streams of Palestinians filed into the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis on Monday to salvage what they could from the vast destruction left in the wake of Israel's offensive, a day after the Israeli military announced it was withdrawing troops from the area.

Many came back to the Gaza Strip's second-largest city to find their former hometown unrecognisable. With scores of buildings destroyed or damaged, piles of rubble now sit where apartments and businesses once did. Streets have been bulldozed. Schools and hospitals were damaged by the fighting.

Israel sent troops to Khan Younis in December, part of its blistering ground offensive. The war, now in its seventh month, has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to local health authorities, displaced most of the territory's 2.3 million people and left vast swaths of the beleaguered Gaza Strip uninhabitable.

"Many areas, especially the city centre, have become unfit for life," said Mahmoud Abdel-Ghani, who fled Khan Younis in December when Israel began its ground invasion of the city. "I found that my house and my neighbours' houses turned to rubble."

The latest Israeli withdrawal also cleared the way for some Palestinians to make their way back to the area to comb through the mountains of debris to try to hold on to any possessions that remained.

Najwa Ayyash, who also was displaced from Khan Younis, said she was unable to reach her family's third floor apartment because the stairs were gone.

Her brother climbed his way up through the destruction and pulled down some possessions, including lighter clothes for her children.

Bassel Abu Nasser, a Khan Younis resident who fled after an airstrike hit his home in January, said much of the city turned into rubble.

"There is no sense of life there," the 37-year-old father of two children said. "They left nothing there."

On Sunday, shortly after the military announced it had withdrawn, lines of Palestinians could be seeing leaving Khan Younis with scant possessions. *—AP*

Lanka Freedom Party set to face long legal battle

COLOMBO, 8 APRIL

Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) is set to get into a long legal battle this election year with separate factions trying to gain control of it as Nimal Siripala de Silva, an incumbent minister, was on Monday appointed the party's acting chairman in place of former president Maithripala Sirisena. SLPP is one of the major and most well-known political parties in Sri Lanka which has ruled the island nation for many years. Last week, Sirisena was clamped with a restraining order as the leader of the party after he dropped from party posts de Silva and two others, who are also ministers in President Ranil Wickremesinghe's government. The trio has already obtained the court's interim orders suspending the action of Srisena, the 72-year-old former prime minister. *—PTI*

Motorcycle bomb kills 2 people in Pakistan

QUETTA, 8 APRIL

A motorcycle bomb killed two people and wounded five in Pakistan's southwest, a police official said Sunday. It's the latest unrest to hit Baluchistan province, where militants have tried to target a naval facility and a government building in recent weeks. Nobody immediately claimed responsibility for Sunday's blast in Khuzdar, which is on the main highway connecting the provincial capital Quetta with the port city of Karachi in neighboring Sindh province. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Zarkon said a woman and two police officers were among the wounded. For years, Baluchistan has been the scene of a low-level insurgency by groups demanding independence from the central government in Islamabad. Although the government says it has quelled the insurgency, violence in the province has persisted. *—PTI*

UK: Indian charged with robbery using fake firearm

BALTIMORE, 8 APRIL

An Indian-origin man who is suspected of threatening staff at a Post Office in Hounslow, west London, to steal a large quantity of cash has been charged with robbery and possession of an imitation firearm, Scotland Yard said on Monday. Rajvinder Kahlon, 41, was arrested last week at his home address following the robbery at the Post Office on Brabazon Road, Hounslow, on 1 April. The Metropolitan Police said its Flying Squad officers responded to the reports and detectives were able to piece together the suspect's identity. "The man threatened two members of staff with what they believed was a firearm before making off with a large quantity of cash," the Met Police said in a statement. Kahlon remains in custody and will next appear at Isleworth Crown Court in west London on 6 May. *—PTI*

In UN court, Germany sued for Israel's genocide in Gaza

Nicaragua claims Germany has enabled acts of genocide

THE HAGUE, 8 APRIL

Preliminary hearings are opening Monday at the United Nations' top court in a case that seeks an end to German military and other aid to Israel, based on claims that Berlin is enabling acts of genocide and breaches of international humanitarian law in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Nicaragua argues that by giving Israel political, financial and military support and by defunding the United Nations aid agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, "Germany is facilitating the commission of genocide and, in any case has failed in its obligation to do everything possible to prevent the commission of genocide."

While the case brought by Nicaragua centers on Germany, it indirectly takes aim at Israel's military campaign in Gaza. Israel strongly denies that its assault amounts to genocidal acts, saying it is acting in self-defence. Israeli legal adviser Tal Becker told judges at the court earlier this year that the country is fighting a "war it did not start and did not want."

Israel denies that its assault amounts to genocide

PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

Germany rejects the case brought by Nicaragua.

Nicaragua has asked the court to hand down preliminary orders known as provisional measures, including that Germany "immediately suspend its aid to Israel, in particular its military assistance including military equipment in so far as this aid may be used in the violation of the Genocide Convention" and international law.

The court will likely take weeks to deliver its preliminary decision, and Nicaragua's case will probably drag on for years. Monday's hearing at the world court comes amid growing calls for allies to stop supplying arms to Israel as its six-month campaign continues to lay waste to Gaza. *—PTI*

The overcrowded boat was carrying 130 people and many of those who drowned were children

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

90 dead as ship sinks near Mozambique

HARARE, 8 APRIL

A makeshift ferry sank off Mozambique's northern coast on Sunday, killing more than 90 people including children, local media reported.

The overcrowded boat was carrying 130 people and many of those who drowned were children, according to TV Diário Nampula, a local online outlet. The boat was operating between Lunga and the Island of Mozambique in Nampula province in the north of the country when it capsized, the report said. Rescue efforts continued on Monday, as people were still reportedly missing. Some people had been travelling to attend a fair while others were trying to "flee from Lunga to the Island of Mozambique for fear of being contaminated by cholera, which has affected that region in recent days," TV Diário Nampula reported.

Other news reports quoted Jaime Neto, the secretary of state in Nampula province, as saying that misinformation about an alleged cholera outbreak caused people to panic and board the boat, which ordinarily serves as a fishing vessel, in an attempt to flee.

Mozambique and neighbouring southern African countries Zimbabwe and Malawi have in recent months been affected by a deadly cholera outbreak that authorities are battling to contain.

Many areas of Mozambique are only accessible by boats, which are often overcrowded. The country has a poor road network and some areas are unreachable by land or air. *—PTI*

FAA said it would carry out an investigation

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Boeing engine cover falls off mid takeoff

NEW YORK, 8 APRIL

A Boeing 737-800 plane operated by Southwest Airlines and headed to Houston returned safely to Denver International Airport on Sunday after an engine cover fell off and struck the wing flap of the aircraft, CNN reported, citing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The FAA said that it would carry out an investigation into the matter. In recorded air traffic control audio, one of the pilots said that "several passengers and flight attendants heard something loud hit the wing." In a statement to CNN, Southwest said passengers will now take another flight to Houston and would be approximately three hours behind schedule.

The statement reads, "We apologize for the inconvenience of their delay but place our highest priority on ultimate Safety for our Customers and Employees." It further said no injuries were reported, CNN reported. In a statement, Southwest said its maintenance teams will review the flight, which departed at 7:49 am (local time) and reached back at 8:15 am (local time). The plane reached an altitude of about 10,000 feet. According to FAA records, the plane was deemed airworthy in May 2015, according to CNN report. This is the latest incident of mechanical issues faced by Boeing aircraft across a range of airlines over the past several months even as the company has faced years of scrutiny regarding the safety of its planes. *—PTI*

Abortion legislation should be left to states, says Trump

NEW YORK, 8 APRIL

Former President Donald Trump says he believes abortion should be left to the states in a video released on Monday outlining his position after months of mixed messages and speculation.

"My view is now that we have abortion where everybody wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation or perhaps both. And whatever they decide must be the law of the land — in this case, the law of the state."

He declined to lay out a timeline for when he believes abortion should be banned. He went on to describe the current legal landscape, in which different states have different restrictions following the US Supreme Court decision ending Roe vs Wade.

"Many states will be different. Many will have a different number of weeks or some will have more conservative than others and that's what they will be," he said. "At the end of the day it's all about will of the people." Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, had written on his social media site Sunday night that he planned to issue a statement on "abortion and abortion rights" after he sidestepped questions about when in a pregnancy he believes the line should be drawn. *—PTI*

AMID ANIMOSITIES WITH NORTH

S Korea launches 2nd military spy satellite

SEOUL, 8 APRIL

South Korea has launched its second military spy satellite into space, days after North Korea reaffirmed its plan to launch multiple reconnaissance satellites this year.

The Koreas each launched their first spy satellites last year – North Korea in November and South Korea in December — amid heightened animosities.

South Korea's second spy satellite was launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Sunday.

South Korea's Defence Ministry said the satellite was successfully separated from a rocket. It said it will check whether the satellite functions properly via its communications with an overseas ground station.

Under a contract with SpaceX, South Korea was to launch five spy satellites by 2025. South Korea's first spy satellite launch on 1 December, 2023, was made from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base.

South Korea's second military spy satellite lifts off from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral

PHOTO: AP/PTI

South Korea in 2022 became the world's 10th nation to successfully launch a satellite with its own technology by using a homegrown rocket to place what it called a "performance observation satellite" in orbit. But experts say it's economical to use a SpaceX rocket to launch spy satellite and that South Korea needs more launches to ensure the reliability of a rocket. *—PTI*

Kyiv denies Russian claim of attacking nuke plant

KYIV, 8 APRIL

A senior Ukrainian official has denied Russian accusations that his country's army fired exploding drones at Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which the Kremlin's forces have been occupying and running in southern Ukraine since shortly after the war began more than two years ago.

Andrii Yusov, the spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency suggested there had been no attack, saying Russian forces routinely fabricate strikes on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. However, the strikes on this occasion were confirmed by UN's atomic watchdog agency, though it didn't attribute responsibility for the attack to either side.

The plant has repeatedly been caught in the crossfire since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and seized the facility shortly after. The International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN body, has frequently expressed alarm about the facility amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe.

The plant's six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features.

The UN's atomic watchdog agency on Sunday confirmed drone strikes on one of the plant's six reactors, causing one casualty. *—PTI*

'THREATS TO DIGNITY'

Vatican says no to sex change, surrogacy

VATICAN CITY, 8 APRIL

The Vatican on Monday declared sex change operations and surrogacy as grave threats to human dignity, putting them on par with abortion and euthanasia as practices that violate God's plan for human life.

The Vatican's doctrine office issued "Infinite Dignity," a 20-page declaration that has been in the works for five years. After substantial revision in recent months, it was approved on 25 March by Pope Francis, who ordered its publication.

In its most eagerly anticipated section, the Vatican repeated its rejection of "gender theory" or the idea that one's gender can be changed. It said God created man and woman as biologically different, separate beings, and said they must not tinker with that plan or try to "make oneself God."

The Vatican repeated its rejection of "gender theory" or the idea that one's gender can be changed

PHOTO: X/@23WIFR

It distinguished between transitioning surgeries, which it rejected, and "genital abnormalities" that are present at birth or that develop later. Those abnormalities can be "resolved" with the help of health care professionals, it said.

And while rejecting gender theory, the document takes pointed aim at countries — including many in Africa — that criminalise homosexuality. It echoed Francis' assertion in a 2023 interview with The Associated Press that "being homosexual is not a crime" making the assertion now part of the Vatican's doctrinal teaching.

The new document denounces "as contrary to human dignity the fact that, in some places, not a few people are imprisoned, tortured, and even deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation."

The document is something of a repackaging of previously articulated Vatican positions. It restates well-known Catholic doctrine opposing abortion and euthanasia, and adds to the list some of Francis' main concerns as pope: the threats to human dignity posed by poverty, war, human trafficking and forced migration. *—AP*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Rupee settles at ₹83.31 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

The rupee settled on a flat note on Monday at 83.31 (provisional) against the US dollar, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market. Forex traders said investor sentiments got a boost as crude oil prices retreated from their elevated levels, but the strength of the American currency in the overseas market weighed on the local unit and restricted the uptick. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.27 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.23 and a low of 83.33. The local unit finally settled at 83.31 (provisional) against the dollar, unchanged from its previous close. —*PTI*

Prestige Estates clocks record sales at ₹21,040cr

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects Ltd on Monday reported a 63 per cent annual increase in its sales bookings last fiscal to Rs 21,040 crore -- an all time high -- on higher demand for its residential properties. In a regulatory filing, Prestige Estates informed that the company achieved the highest-ever annual sales. "Prestige Group achieved a record-breaking sales milestone of Rs 21,040 crore for FY24, marking a growth of 63 per cent year-on-year," it said. The company's sales bookings stood at Rs 12,931 crore in the financial year 2022-23.—*PTI*

Bandhan Bank shares tank over 9 per cent

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Shares of Bandhan Bank on Monday tanked over 9 per cent after the private sector lender said its founder, managing director and CEO Chandra Shekhar Ghosh has decided to demit office after the completion of his tenure. The stock declined 9 per cent to Rs 179.55 on the BSE. At the NSE, shares of the company tumbled 9.17 per cent to Rs 179.25.Ghosh will retire from the services of the bank as MD and CEO upon completion of his current tenure on July 9, 2024, the bank said in a regulatory filing on Friday."After leading the bank for almost a decade, including three consecutive tenures (9 years) as MD & CEO, I feel that the time has now come for me to assume a larger strategic role at Bandhan group level," Ghosh said in a letter addressed to the board.—*PTI*

Muthoot Microfin jumps 32 pc to ₹12,194cr in March

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Muthoot Microfin on Monday said its assets under management (AUM) grew 32 per cent to Rs 12,194 crore as of 31 March. In its business update report, Muthoot Microfin said its loan disbursement was at record Rs 10,662 crore during 2023-24, a 32 per cent jump over previous year. In a statement, the company said it has seen a substantial growth in FY24 with a healthy mix of credit expansion, rising margins and declining credit cost. Asset quality remained robust during the year. "Our key focus areas for the next year include Assets Under Management (AUM) Growth, Asset Quality, digital inclusion, customer retention and geographic expansion," Muthoot Microfin said. The company has 33.5 lakh active customers and 1,508 branches, including in Telangana, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Shares of the company were trading at Rs 235.80 apiece, up 1.05 per cent over previous close on BSE.—*PTI*

Mcap of BSE-listed firms hits ₹400 lakh cr milestone

This is the first time these firms have achieved ₹400L cr mark

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reached an all-time closing high of Rs 400.86 lakh crore on Monday, following a record rally in equities, wherein the 30-share BSE Sensex scaled its lifetime peak.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies has gone past the coveted Rs 400 lakh crore mark for the first time.

The 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 494.28 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at 74,742.50. During the day, it climbed 621.08 points or 0.83 per cent to reach a new intra-day record high of 74,869.30.

Thanks to the rally in equities, the market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed companies reached an all-time closing high of Rs 4,00,86,722.74 crore (USD 4.81 trillion).

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms had hit the Rs 300 lakh crore mark in July last year.

From the Sensex basket, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, and Power Grid were the major gainers.

The 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 494.28 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at 74,742.50 PHOTO: PTI

Nestle, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Titan, HDFC Bank, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were the laggards.

"Markets maintained optimism throughout the trading session as robust global cues boosted key benchmark indices to fresh record highs on broad-based buying support. Domestic fund flows have been strong, which is giving local equity markets a major fillip in spite of choppy foreign fund inflows.

"Despite expensive valuations, investors are willing to bet big on Indian stocks on expectations of a strong growth momentum going ahead, which would augur well for equity markets," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading in the positive zone. Wall Street ended with gains on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,659.27 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.81 per cent to USD 90.45 a barrel. —*PTI*

FRESH RECORDS

Sensex, Nifty hit records on global markets

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty reached their fresh record highs on Monday, amid optimism in global markets and foreign fund inflows.

Buying in index major Reliance Industries also fuelled the rally in equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 494.28 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 74,742.50.

During the day, it zoomed 621.08 points or 0.83 per cent to reach a record intra-day high of 74,869.30.

The NSE Nifty climbed 152.60 points or 0.68 per cent to 22,666.30. During the day, it jumped 183.6 points or 0.81 per cent to hit a lifetime high of 22,697.30.

From the Sensex basket, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, and Power Grid were the major gainers.

Nestle, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, Titan, HCL Technologies and Infosys were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading in the positive zone. Wall Street ended with gains on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,659.27 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.81 per cent to USD 90.43 a barrel.

"The buoyancy in sentiment continued, led by sectorial tailwinds and Q4 earnings growth expectations. The up-move was largely broad-based, with outperformance by auto, reality, oil & gas, and consumer discretionary, while IT was tepid owing to insipid Q4 growth expectations due to a slowdown in spending," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. —*PTI*

'UNLAWFUL GAIN'

SEBI grills finfluencer, orders giving ₹12cr

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Sebi has barred Ravindra Bharti Education Institute, co-founded by finfluencer and YouTuber Ravindra Balu Bharti, from the securities market and directed to deposit Rs 12 crore "unlawful gain" earned from the alleged unregistered investment advisory business.

It has been directed to deposit the amount to an interest-bearing escrow account created specifically for the purpose in a nationalised bank.

Additionally, the regulator has barred Ravindra Balu Bharti, his wife Shubhangi Ravindra Bharti and directors -- Rahul Ananta Gosavi and Dhanashri Chandrakant Gosavi -- from the securities market. Also, these persons have been restrained from associating themselves with any intermediary registered with Sebi in any capacity.

PHOTO: PTI

Ravindra Bharti Education Institute Pvt. Ltd. (RBEIPL) was founded in 2016 by Ravindra Balu Bharti and his wife. The company claims to be primarily involved in imparting training or education related to stock market trading activities.

In its interim order issued on Friday, the regulator noted Ravindra Bharti Education Institute was involved in imparting advice relating to investing in, purchasing, selling or otherwise dealing with insecurities or investment products in lieu of consideration. Investors were lured to take the advisory services by projecting returns in the range of 25 per cent to 1,000 per cent.

It further noted that Ravindra Bharti Education Institute was providing investment advisory services, without obtaining registration from Sebi, which is in violation of regulatory norms. —*PTI*

Adani to set EV charging stations at MG stores

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

A unit of a joint venture between Adani group and French energy giant TotalEnergies will set up EV charging stations at new MG dealerships to bolster the charing network, the company said on Monday.

"Adani TotalEnergies E-Mobility Limited (ATEL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Total Gas Limited (ATGL), and MG Motor India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen the EV charging infrastructure in India," it said in a statement.

In terms of MoU, ATEL will set up CC2 60 kW DC chargers at upcoming MG dealerships to bolster the charging network and enhance customer accessibility.

"The partnership will also provide a comprehensive solution encompassing supply, installation, commissioning, operations, and maintenance of charging infrastructure.

In addition, a digital platform will be launched to facilitate a seamless customer experience, covering discovery, user authentication, charging, and billing settlement through a dedicated mobile application," it said.

Adani-Total Gas Ltd, the city gas retailing venture of Adani group and TotalEnergies, retails CNG to automobiles and pipes cooking gas to household kitchens in several cities across the country.

It has a current installed capacity of around 6 MW with approximately 500 charge points under construction. —*PTI*

WIPRO SHARES DECLINE OVER 1 PER CENT

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Shares of Wipro on Monday declined over 1 per cent after the IT major announced the resignation of Thierry Delaporte as CEO and named Srinivas Pallia as the new Chief Executive Officer of the company, effective immediately.

The stock dipped 1.40 per cent to Rs 478.40 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it declined 1.41 per cent to Rs 478.20.

The announcement comes days before the Bengaluru-headquartered company is scheduled to announce its Q4 and full-year earnings for 2023-24 on 19 April.

Wipro said its Board noted the resignation of Delaporte with effect from 6 April, 2024, and went on to add that he will be relieved from the employment of the company with effect from the close of business hours on 31 May, 2024. —*PTI*

No. of telecom subscribers grows to 119.7 crore: TRAI

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The number of telecom subscribers in India increased 0.38 per cent to 119.7 crore in February 2024 as compared to the previous month, according to a TRAI report published on Monday.

The urban telephone subscription increased to 66.37 crore while rural subscription increased to 53.13 crore with a sequential growth rate of 0.40 per cent and 0.34 per cent, respectively.

The total broadband subscribers also increased from 91.10 crore at the end of January to 91.67 crore at February-end, as per the monthly subscriber report published by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Top five service providers constituted 98.35 per cent of the total broadband subscribers.

The service providers are Reliance Jio Infocomm (52.2 per cent), Bharti Airtel (29.41 per cent), Vodafone Idea (13.80 per cent), Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) (2.69 per cent), and Atria Convergence (0.24 per cent).

The total number of wireless subscribers increased to 116.46 crore, registering a monthly growth rate of 0.34 per cent.

Wireless subscription in rural areas increased from 52.67 crore to 52.85 crore at a monthly growth rate of 0.34 per cent, same as that of urban.

The report said 1.15 crore requests were received in February for mobile number portability.

The highest number of requests received to date since the inception of portability services has been Uttar Pradesh-East (about 8.86 crore) in North-West zone, and Madhya Pradesh (about 7.33 crore) in South-East zone. —*PTI*

TOYOTA CONTROLS DAIHATSU'S CERTIFICATION

TOKYO, 8 APRIL

Japanese automaker Toyota will oversee model certification at its subsidiary Daihatsu to regain trust among dealers, customers and workers after a safety testing scandal, Daihatsu's new president said on Monday.

Toyota Motor Corp will take a leadership role in various areas, including product development and procurement, said Masahiro Inoue, who took the helm of Daihatsu in March.His predecessor at Daihatsu resigned after the allegations of widespread cheating on safety testing surfaced last year. A third-party review found violations, such as testing just one side of a car instead of both, had persisted for decades. The news has raised questions about oversight at Daihatsu, owned by Toyota. —*PTI*

'Automobile sales see double-digit growth'

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Automobile retail sales in India saw double-digit growth in 2023-24 driven by record offtake of passenger vehicles, three- wheelers and tractors, dealers' body FADA said on Monday.

The retail sales across segments rose by 10 per cent to 2,45,30,334 units last fiscal as compared with 2,22,41,361 units in 2022-23.

The Indian automobile sector achieved a commendable double-digit growth across categories with two-wheelers, three-wheelers, passenger vehicles (PV), tractors and commercial vehicles registering strong demand, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement.

Retail sales across segments rose by 10 per cent to 2,45,30,334 units last fiscal PHOTO: PIXABAY

Notably, PV, three-wheeler and tractor segments set records, surpassing previous years' performances, he added.

PV registrations rose to 39,48,143 units last fiscal, an increase of 8 per cent as compared with 36,40,399 units in 2022-23. Factors such as improved vehicle availability, a compelling model mix and the launch of new models played pivotal roles, Singhania said. —*PTI*

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

Hyundai, Kia, Exide to make EV batteries

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Hyundai Motor Company (Hyundai Motor) and Kia Corporation (Kia) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for strategic cooperation with Exide Energy Solutions Ltd (Exide Energy), a leading Indian battery company, as part of their electric vehicle (EV) expansion plans.

The signing ceremony took place at Hyundai Motor Group's Namyang Research and Development Center in South Korea.

With the expansion of their EV plans for the Indian market, Hyundai Motor and Kia aim to localise their EV battery production, specifically focusing on lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) cells.

As per a release, this strategic move will position them as the pioneers in applying domestically produced batteries in their upcoming EV models in the Indian market.

"India is a key market for vehicle electrification due in part to the government's carbon neutrality goals, which makes securing cost competitiveness through localized battery production crucial," said Heui Won Yang, President and Head of Hyundai Motor and Kia's R&D Division.

With the expansion of their EV plans for the Indian market, Hyundai Motor and Kia aim to localise their EV battery production PHOTO: PTI

"Through this global partnership with Exide Energy Solutions Ltd., we will gain a competitive advantage by equipping Hyundai Motor and Kia's future EV models in the Indian market with locally produced batteries."

Kolkata-based Exide Industries Ltd, a leading lead-acid battery supplier in India has over 75 years of experience and market leadership in lead-acid batteries.

Exide Energy Solutions Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary company of Exide Industries Ltd, which was established in 2022 to foray into the business of manufacturing Lithium-Ion cells, modules and packs incorporating a portfolio of multiple chemistries and form factors.

This strategic cooperation with Exide Energy marks the beginning of Hyundai Motor and Kia's efforts to expand its exclusive battery development, production, supply and partnerships in the Indian market.India is recognized as a highly promising automotive market worldwide.As per data released by the auto dealers association on Monday, for the entire 2023-24, retail auto sales in India achieved a notable 10 per cent year-on-year growth, with the 2W, 3W, passenger vehicle, tractor and commercial vehicle segments registering growth rates of 9 per cent, 49 per cent, 8.45 per cent, 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, setting record highs in the 3W, passenger vehicle and tractor categories. —*ANI*

Blackstone-backed Aadhar Housing gets Sebi nod

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd, which is backed by private equity major Blackstone, has received Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

SEBI's go-ahead to raise Rs 5,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO), an update with the markets regulator showed on Monday.

The proposed IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,000 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 4,000 crore by promoter BCP Topco VII Pte Ltd, an affiliate of Blackstone Group Inc, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

Currently, BCP Topco holds a 98.72 per cent stake in Aadhar Housing Finance.

Aadhar Housing Finance, which filed preliminary IPO papers with the markets regulator in February, SEBI has obtained its observation on 5 April, an update with the showed.

SEBI's observation means it's a go-ahead to float the IPO.

Going by the draft papers, the company proposes to utilise the proceeds from the fresh issue to the tune of Rs 750 crore for meeting future capital requirements towards onward lending and a portion will also be used for general corporate purposes

Aadhar Housing Finance offers a range of mortgage-related loan products, including loans for residential property purchase and construction; home improvement and extension loans; and loans for commercial property construction and acquisition.

The company is a retail-focused HFC focused on the low income housing segment, serving economically weaker and low-to-middle income customers, who require small ticket mortgage loans.

It has a network of 471 branches, including 91 sales offices, as of 30 September, —*PTI*

Nagal stuns world No 38 Arnaldi at Monte Carlo Masters

MONTE CARLO, 8 APRIL

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal shocked world number 38 Matteo Arnaldi in a gruelling three-set contest to earn his maiden main draw win at an ATP Masters event in Monte Carlo on Monday. The top Indian singles player, who entered the ATP Masters 1000 event via qualifying route, erased a one-set deficit to turn the tables on his Italian opponent for a memorable 5-7 6-2 6-4 win in the first round. He will next take on world number seven Holger Rune from Denmark. This is Nagal's third victory over a top-50 player and second time in the current season. Ranked 95th in the world, Nagal had also qualified for the Indian Wells Masters in March this year but fell to formidable Canadian Milos Raonic in the first round. *—PTI*

Asia-Oceneia C'ship: Men's single and team wins gold

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Amar Singh Devanda smashed his own national record en route retaining the individual gold medal and helping the men's team to finish on top of the podium for the second consecutive edition of the IAU 24-hr Asia-Oceania Ultrarunning Championships in Canberra, Australia. Devanda completed a distance of 272.537 km in the 24-hour run to win the gold in the competition which ended on Sunday. He had also won a gold in the previous edition held in Bengaluru in 2022 by completing a distance of 257.618 km. Devanda rewrote his national record by nearly 15 km, according to information provided by the Athletics Federation of India. Among other Indians in the fray, Ullas Narayana finished third by completing a distance of 245.574 km while Saurav Ranjan was fourth with 240.137 km. *—PTI*

Endrik wins another title ahead of joining Madrid

SAO PAULO, 8 APRIL

Teenage striker Endrick has won another title with Brazilian club Palmeiras before he leaves to join Real Madrid. The 17-year-old Endrick helped his team secure its third consecutive Sao Paulo state championship with a 2-0-win Sunday over local rival Santos. Endrick, who scored two goals for Brazil in friendlies last month, drew the penalty that allowed Raphael Veiga to open the scoring in the 33rd minute. Anibal Moreno netted the second in the 67th. Santos won the first leg 1-0. During his stint with the national team for friendlies against England and Spain, Endrick said he was regularly asked about his pending move. Endrick was also part of the Palmeiras squad that won the 2023 Sao Paulo championship title. *—AP*

Joe Kinnear, former Tottenham player dies at 77

LONDON, 8 APRIL

Joe Kinnear, who won FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup as a player with Tottenham and went on to manage Wimbledon and Newcastle, passed away at 77. Kinnear's wife Bonnie said in 2021 that he had been living with dementia since 2015. Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou paid tribute to Kinnear after his team's 3-1 win against Nottingham Forest in the Premier League on Sunday. He made 26 appearances for Ireland during his playing career and joined Tottenham as a teenager in 1963. He took the Nottingham Forest job in February 2004 and later replaced Kevin Keegan at Newcastle in 2008. In February 2009, Kinnear was taken to hospital after feeling ill ahead of a match and it was later announced he needed a heart bypass operation, leading to Alan Shearer taking the job. *—AP*

Real Madrid well rested to take on Man City

This will be Ancelotti's 200th Champions League game

MADRID, 8 APRIL

One of the Champions League's newest rivalries resumes this week with Real Madrid hoping to take advantage of the extended rest it had ahead of Tuesday's quarterfinal against Manchester City.

Carlo Ancelotti arrives as the Madrid coach with most Champions League titles (four) and victories (114) has had eight full days to prepare his squad for facing Pep Guardiola's Manchester City for the third straight year in the knockout rounds of Europe's top club competition.

City, meanwhile, played on Saturday at Crystal Palace in the Premier League and Guardiola wasn't happy about the considerable difference in the teams' preparation time. Madrid's last Spanish league match was on 31 March, a 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao. Madrid didn't have to play this past weekend as the Spanish calendar was reserved for the Copa del Rey final.

Real Madrid players practicing ahead of Quarterfinal match *PHOTO: X/REAL MADRID CF*

Ancelotti said Monday he is not going to make any "rare" changes to his team or try anything too different tactically because of the extra time he had to prepare.

"It is an incredibly attractive match," he said. "The quality of both sides will allow us to watch a beautiful match at a technical level. We think we will be better than City in some aspects and they think they will be better than us in others. After the end of the 180 minutes we will see which team prevails."

caption *PHOTO: X/REAL MADRID CF*

Madrid eliminated City two seasons ago with a late comeback in the second leg of the semifinals at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, where it hasn't lost in 27 straight games in all competitions dating back to last April.

They will have faced each other 12 times in 12 years after this season's quarterfinals.

Madrid and Man City drew 1-1 in the first leg at the Bernabeu last season in a match marked by the duel between Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger and Man City striker Erling Haaland, who was the Champions League's leading scorer at the time. Ancelotti will try to win his third Champions League title with Madrid with a squad that this season was boosted by the signing of Jude Bellingham. Both teams are trying to reach the semifinals of the Champions League for the fourth straight time.

City has concerns at full back for the game in Madrid, with captain Walker hurt on England duty in the recent international break and Guardiola's two main options at left back — Nathan Ake and Josko Gvardiol — picking up injuries since the beginning. *—AP*

GUJRATHI FALTERS AGAIN

FIDE Candidates: Gukesh holds Fabiano Caruana

TORONTO, 8 APRIL

Grandmaster D Gukesh did well to hold top-seeded American Fabiano Caruana to a draw but Vidit Gujrathi suffered another defeat at the hands of Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia in the fourth round of the Candidates chess tournament now underway here.

On a day when R Praggnanandhaa played out an uneventful draw with Hikaru Nakamura of the United States, Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan fought hard to split the point with Firouzja Alireza of France to stay in contention in the eight-player double round-robin event that decides the challenger for the next world championship.

Nepomniachtchi became the first sole leader in the event on three points following his second victory with white pieces and he is now followed by Caruana and Gukesh on 2.5 points apiece. Praggnanandhaa is not far behind on two points holding the fourth spot while Gujrathi, Abasov, Alireza and Nakamura have an identical 1.5 points each.

In the women's section, R Vaishali made sure her streak matches with that of younger sibling Praggnanandhaa and played out a draw with rating favourite Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia but Koneru Humpy succumbed to her first defeat at the hands of lowest seed and youngest participant Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria.

Gukesh was under some pressure in the middle game but came up with a fine pawn sacrifice leading to trade of many pieces. The ensuing endgame with Queen's and pawns on board still gave Caruana some optical chances but the Indian remained on his guard for 72 moves to ensure the draw. Gujrathi had won his second-round game using the Berlin defense against Nakamura so his choice of opening was quite predictable against Nepomniachtchi too. Nepomniachtchi marched his king deep into the heart of black's position and when a heavy material loss became inevitable, Gujrathi called it a day. *—PTI*

D Gukesh holds Fabiano Caruana; Vidit Gujrathi falters at Candidates chess tournament *PHOTO: X@toisports*

Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy *PHOTO: PTI*

BAC medal hunt: Sindhu & Co face tough fight

NINGBO, 8 APRIL

Star Indian shuttlers, including PV Sindhu, will face a tough test against some of the world's best when they begin their medal hunt at Badminton Asia Championships which will start with the qualifiers on Tuesday.

The last-minute withdrawal of world No. 1 pair and defending champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty might have taken a bit of sheen away but it will put the onus on the singles stars to put their hands up during the continental individual championships.

Sindhu has a 4-1 record against the Malaysian and a favourable result might see her face sixth seed Chinese Han Yue, whom Indian has recently beaten for the fifth time at the Badminton Asia Team Championships in February.

If she can cross the hurdle then it could be Japan's Yamaguchi or Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon next.

Aakarshi Kashyap will be the other Indian in women's singles and she will open against Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan.

In men's singles, there are plenty of match-ups with Lakshya Sen, who made two semifinal finishes at the French Open and All England Championships and is set to almost seal his Paris qualification, having the task of taming top seed Shi Yu Qi of China.

Young Indian shuttler Priyanshu Rajawat will meet Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia in his opening round.

In Satwik-Chirag's absence, the Indian pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila will hope to go deep when they open against seventh-seeded Chinese Liu Yu Chen and Ou Xuan Yi. *—PTI*

IOA chief PT Usha revolts against Executive Council

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha on Monday said that the revolting Executive Council members were trying to sideline her by their acts of defiance, including issuing termination letters to an official appointed by her.

On Friday, nine EC members had pasted a signed notice at the IOA office premises here, asking "unauthorised persons" not to enter its headquarters. The notice, which Usha termed as "arbitrary", was directed at two recently appointed officials.

A majority of EC members had earlier claimed that they had signed a suspension order declaring Raghuram Iyer's appointment as IOA CEO in January as null and void. EC members also claimed that they had "terminated" Ajay Narang from the post of executive assistant to IOA president. Usha acknowledged the receipt of the termination letter served to Narang by the EC members but rejected it as "absolute nullity".

Just a few days after Iyer was made CEO on January 6, 12 out of 15 EC members alleged that Usha "exerted pressure" on them to pave the way for his appointment, a charge the legendary athlete described as "shameful"*—PTI*

PBKS to face SRH in mid-table IPL clash

MULLANPUR, 8 APRIL

An inconsistent Punjab Kings will hope to come out with an attacking display to match the ultra-aggressive approach of Sunrisers Hyderabad as the two teams clash in a mid-table battle in the IPL on Tuesday.

Both SRH and PBKS have two wins and two losses from their four matches to be tied with two other teams in the middle with four points and they will be desperate to break out of the mid-table logjam first. While SRH have been unpredictable sometimes they have displayed their might with the bat with their top-order firing on all cylinders on most occasions. But the same cannot be said about the Kings.

SRH recorded the highest team total in the history of the IPL en route their win over Mumbai Indians, while they also notched up a convincing six-wicket win over reigning champions Chennai Super Kings on Friday.

PBKS too have plenty of big-hitting potential with their batting line-up boosting off Shikhar Dhawan, Jonny Bairstow, Liam Livingstone. But apart from the skipper, none has been able to consistently put up a show so far. *—PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

PUNJAB KINGS vs SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Time: 7.30 pm

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Yadavindra Singh Stadium, Mohali

Jadeja rips apart KKR, restrict them to 137/9

CHENNAI, 8 APRIL

Ravindra Jadeja worked his magic taking three wickets in a space of eight balls to rip the heart out of KKR's batting as Chennai Super Kings were left to chase 137 for 9 in an IPL match here on Monday.

Having lost back-to-back games, CSK were back in their element on a familiar Chepauk turf where the ball gripped, and Jadeja (3/18 in 4 overs) and Maheesh Theeksana (1/28 in 4 overs) were brilliant.

While KKR lost Phil Salt (0) cheaply off the very first delivery, Sunil Narine and young Angkrish Raghuvanshi added 56 in Powerplay.

With the ball gripping and not coming onto the bat, Narine's lofted shot was holed out in the deep and Raghuvanshi's inexperience became his undoing as he played an indiscreet reverse sweep to a straight delivery.

Venkatesh Iyer (3) was ill at ease against Theekshana, who got his mojo back after being hit for two sixes in his first over and then Jadeja got his man, who wanted to slog out of trouble. *—PTI*

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Hockey India picks their core team for camp

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Seasoned campaigners like goalkeeper Savita Punia and forward Vandana Katariya were on Monday included in Hockey India's 33-strong list of core probable with some new faces also finding their way into the pruned group that will train till 16 May for the upcoming FIH Pro League fixtures.

HI had earlier selected 60 players for the camp before trimming the squad strength based on the selection trials which were held on 6 and 7 April after the recent National Championship.

Indian women's hockey team is set to travel to Antwerp and London to face Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain in the FIH Hockey Pro League starting 22 May.

Savita Punia *PHOTO: ANI*

Vandana Katariya *PHOTO: ANI*

India's first-choice forwards like Lalremsiami, Sangita Kumar and Katariya were also in the group.

HI had promised a revamped national camp after the team failed to qualify for Paris Olympics, a big step backwards after the historic fourth-place finish in the Tokyo Olympics.

The most notable new additions in the camp were 22-year-old Marina Lalramnghaki, who represented Mizoram, and the 25-year-old Manisha Chauhan, who represented Manipur, in the nationals.

Preeti Dubey, who made her last appearance for the senior side during the World League Semifinal in 2017, has clawed her way back into the national setup after impressing the selectors and coaches in the assessment camp here.

Similarly, goalkeeper Madhuri Kindo, defenders Ropni Kumari, Preeti, midfielder Edula Jyoti and forwards Deepika Soreng and Rutuja Pisal have stepped up from the junior team that featured in last year's Junior World Cup. *—PTI*

Bhatia wins Texas Open, books Augusta Masters spot

SAN ANTONIO, 8 APRIL

Indian American golfer Akshay Bhatia prevailed in a playoff to script a dramatic win at the Valero Texas Open and earn a spot at next week's Augusta Masters, which will be his first appearance in a Major.

It was virtually the last spot left at the Augusta Masters and Bhatia claimed it after staving off a serious challenge from Denny McCarthy, who birdied eight of the last nine holes at the TPC San Antonio here.

The win gets Bhatia into the Masters, a wish and promise he had made to his mother years ago.

The 22-year-old Bhatia, who started the day four shots ahead, went six clears before a stunning back-nine rally by McCarthy saw the two players tied at 20-under after 72 holes.

The win earned Bhatia in excess of USD 1.6m and 500 FedEx He also qualifies for the US Open with his second PGA TOUR victory, and he moves to No 34 in the world. *—PTI*

Golfer Akshay Bhatia *PHoto: PTI*